



Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Solvent and Cleaner Disposal

Ecology Fact Sheet

Publication Number 96-422

Question #1: A supplier says he has a cleaner that is completely biodegradable. Does this mean I can dispose of it down the drain?

Answer: Biodegradable does not mean the same thing as non-hazardous. Even though a cleaner may be biodegradable, your sewer authority may have a number of other restrictions that may apply, including pH, BOD, oils, and temperature. Even if it is biodegradable, testing may still show it to be a dangerous waste, either because of its ingredients or contaminants picked up from the parts being cleaned. Dangerous waste can be sewered under certain conditions, but state regulations require a special permit to do so.

Discarded cleaner may adversely affect the oil/water separator that may be attached to your drain. Cleaners that form emulsions, as many aqueous cleaners do, or that are heated, can render your oil/water separator ineffective. This could lead to sewer or water quality violations.

Nothing except clean storm water should ever be discharged to a storm drain. Wash water should not be discharged through storm drains or drywells, or to ditches or streams. If you are unsure where a drain discharges, call your local sewer authority, public works department, or health department. For more information, see Ecology Publication #F-SWS-94-117.

Question #2: I have a cleaner with a label saying it does not contain hazardous ingredients. Can I dispose of it to my septic tank?

Answer: No, if your drains lead to a septic tank, nothing should be put down the drain except sanitary wastes from restrooms. Septic tank disposal of industrial cleaner maybe illegal in your area, and may harm your septic system. Check with your local health department for more information.

Question #3: We burn our used oil in a space heater during the winter. We use a solvent substitute that does not test to be a dangerous waste when it's spent. Can we put it in the oil and burn it?

Answer: The Department of Ecology does not recommend mixing anything with your used oil. Mixing a waste with your oil will cause it to lose its exemption from the dangerous waste regulations. If it becomes regulated as a dangerous waste fuel, it cannot be burned in a space heater.

Question #4: We use a solvent substitute that is not a hazardous waste when disposed. Can we add it to the used oil that is picked up for recycling?

Answer: No, the Department of Ecology does not recommend mixing anything with your used oil. Adding wastes to used oil can limit the recyclability of the oil and cause it to lose its dangerous waste exemption. Oil collection facilities and oil recycling facilities do not want and may refuse oil mixed with other materials.

Question #5: What do we do with absorbents or shop towels used to pick up drips and spills of solvent?

Answer: The used absorbents are not normally a dangerous waste, and may be eligible for disposal in your local landfill. Call your local landfill for restrictions on the amount of free liquids that are allowed, and other requirements.

Shop towels used to mop spills and drips, or to hand wipe solvents, are conditionally exempt from being dangerous waste if the towels that are sent to a commercial laundry with an adequate sewer permit, and that contain no excess solvent (are wrung out, if necessary). All solvent-laden towels should be stored in labeled, closed containers.

Question #6: Can I use my non-hazardous solvent substitute to wash down our floors?

Answer: If the wash residue enters a drain not connected to a sanitary sewer, then you may not use the cleaner to wash down floors. If the wash residue could enter a sanitary drain, there are restrictions, and the situation is the same as addressed in questions #1 and #2 above.

Question #7: Can filter cartridges from a filtering parts washer be disposed of in the dumpster?

Answer: It depends whether the solvent, or the contaminants captured by the filter would cause it to fail testing for a dangerous waste. If you wish to avoid the expense of testing, handle the filters as you would a dangerous waste.

Question #8: I've looked into alternatives, and some of them seem to produce more waste than the hazardous solvent I currently use. Wouldn't it be better to stick with my current solvent?

Answer: Alternative cleaners, especially those that require rinsing, may produce a greater volume of waste, but this waste may be less toxic and hazardous, or readily treatable by your local sewage treatment plant (see Question # 1).

If you have both acid and caustic waste streams that do not contain other hazardous ingredients or contaminants, you may be able to neutralize them by mixing them together (for more information and precautions see your local sewer authority and Ecology Publication #F-HWTR-93-130). Be aware that combining strong acids and caustics may be dangerous. If you have acid and caustic rinse baths, you might be able to follow an acidic rinse with left-over caustic rinse, and *visa versa*.

Other methods to reduce rinsing waste include:

- ✓ Use countercurrent rinsing.
- ✓ Use spent rinse as bath make-up.
- ✓ Use a cleaner rinse as make up for a dirtier one.
- ✓ Reduce drag-out by orienting parts correctly in the bath, installing drain boards that return drips to baths, using "air knives", or giving parts more time to drain.
- ✓ Use rinsing sprays or fog nozzles over baths, thereby providing makeup water for evaporation (especially from heated tanks).

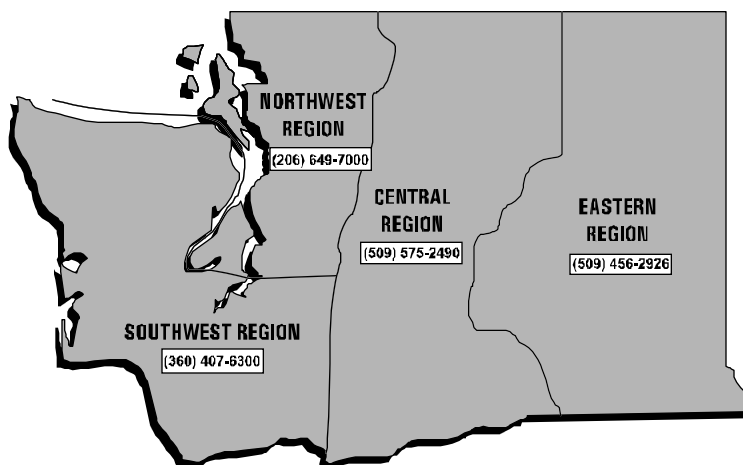
Question #9: I'd like to get some help with understanding the hazardous waste regulations, but I don't want an Ecology inspector to come to my shop. What can I do?

Answer: You can call one of the Ecology offices listed below to obtain free advice over the phone. You do not have to identify yourself when you call. You can also have Ecology send you helpful guides to understanding the regulations.

For More Information

Ecology has experienced Pollution Prevention Consultants available to advise you on solvent substitution techniques and issues. They can provide information over the telephone, or make educational (non-enforcement) visits to your work site to provide free technical assistance on solvent substitution, economic considerations, pollution prevention opportunities, and suppliers. Use the regional phone numbers below to ask for a Toxics Reduction Specialist.

Northwest Region	(206) 649-7000	Central Region	(509) 456-2926
Southwest Region	(360) 407-6300	Eastern Region	(509) 575-2491



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If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in alternative format, please contact the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at (360) 407-6700 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).

Ecology's telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) number is (360) 407-6006. Regional TDD numbers are:

CRO (TDD) (509) 454-7673
ERO (TDD) (509) 458-2055

NWRO (TDD) (206) 649-4259
SWRO (TDD) (360) 407-6306



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